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TOTAL ART IN THE TOTAL SCHOOL.

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A MORE STIMULATING ENVIRONMENT COULD BE PROVIDED IN MANY IOWA SCHOOLS IF EACH SCHOOL'S ART DEPARTMENT WOULD TAKE THE INITIATIVE AND PROVIDE THE NECESSARY LEADERSHIP FOR INTERNAL FACELIFTING PROJECTS. HOWEVER, IN SMALL RURAL SCHOOLS, WHERE SPECIAL ART TEACHERS ARE NOT AVAILABLE, THE CLASSROOM TEACHERS MUST FILL THIS VOID BY BEING CREATIVE AND IMAGINATIVE THEMSELVES. SOME SCHOOLS ARE USING REPRODUCTIONS OF THE CLASSIC WORKS OF ART FOR CREATING A BETTER VISUAL CLIMATE. GOOD ART DISPLAY AREAS INCLUDE HALLWAYS, AUDITORIUMS, CAFETERIAS, AND LIBRARIES. IF STUDENTS BECAME MORE AWARE OF THEIR TOTAL ENVIRONMENT BECAUSE IT WAS LIVELY AND REWARDING, PERHAPS THEY WOULD FEEL THE NEED TO BEAUTIFY THEIR COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENT. THIS ARTICLE APPEARS IN "MIDLAND SCHOOLS," NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 1967, PP. 18-19, 22. (ES)

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TOTAL ART IN THE TOTAL SCHOOL

By Jack E. Olds

A majority of Iowa Schools need an internal facelifting to become a more stimulating environment. Eyes need to be opened wider to sensitize the mind to the aesthetic beauty about, and to the man-made ugliness in and out of a community.

Teachers should do more displaying of student work, not only in their rooms, but in the hallways, libraries, cafeterias, and administrative offices. A school should become a total educational organ so that students exist in a continual state of learning. This does not mean "pressure learning" but rather, a casual inspection and an introspective questioning.

For seven hours a day, five days per week, Iowa children move, breathe and grow in a community school. They also are to think, see, and touch in this crucible of educational potpourri and thus become delectable organisms of human society.

The growth of a child from kindergarten through high school is a seeding, watering, fertilizing and nourishing process. It is a process that has had a great deal of thought and planning in order to allow natural growth, and even a certain amount of stimulating experiences. We want our children to become total human beings who cherish knowledge, love physical activities, and appreciate and respect others of our species.

In Iowa, as in many states I am sure, the lack of total education can be tacked to the educator's door. And this primarily means the individual teacher who helps create the atmosphere of a school and who can instigate new ideas.

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The Art Department's Role

Art departments should take a powerfully active lead in this internal face-lifting. No other department is so qualified and has so much to gain. By taking art to the audience where the audience is, the student body, faculty, and parents have an

opportunity to become artistically stimulated; and the art students receive a tremendous ego boost.

Other departmental areas could well take note too, that attractive displays pertaining to any field of study will receive a good share of attention during the "off-hours" and non-class minutes. The athletic department long ago discovered how to interest students by photos, statistics, schedules, and trophy cases placed in strategic spots. Why not science, languages, and art?

The art department can do the job. It's a natural for a visual discipline to place their wares on display. Yet, as this writer travels Iowa and visits elementary and secondary schools as an art consultant, I see sterile, foreboding halls and cafeterias. If the art teacher would take the initiative and ask for display boards, or cork diaplay strips, or a display case, I feel the superintendents of schools would try hard to accomodate.

If a teacher believes in something strong enough to bring forth ideas, and suggest possible solutions, most administrators will listen and attempt to help. Why not? Every improvement creates a livelier and better learning environment, which is what they desire. And so do parents.

The Small School Problem

Many schools in small communities do not have special teachers or supervisors of art. This is a shame because of the community leadership possible in visual education and the stimulation to adults to enter into art experiences. In these schools, classroom teachers must attempt to fulfill the imaginative, self-expressive student needs while still maintaining their academic curriculum. This is understandably a heavy load. Should we ask these teachers to "up-lift" the school by placing exhibits in halls and other places? I suggest this when I meet with these people, and yet I feel they have enough to do. Why not an art club then, of interested and trusted high school students with the advice of an art oriented teacher? Or the Future Teachers Club? Why not a committee of the PTA, or a local women's club, who wish to help in a positive way?

Help on display ideas can be had from various sources, such as art consultants or certain books dealing with art in the schools. The important point is, art should be displayed for the total school and it can be done effectively so the community benefits.

Some Promising Practices

In the Charles City High school study hall, reproductions by the great artists are displayed. Framed reproductions of a Rembrandt and a Van Gogh are available for student study. At Leland Elementary School, Brookfield, Wisconsin, these same types of reproductions are placed in the hallways, at student eye level, for casual study and enjoyment. Upper elementary students wish to know great persons such as Edison and Bernstein, and should know Picasso and Wyeth as well. A fifth grade class in Waterloo's Kittrell Elementary School was asked to name a great artist whose reproduced painting was displayed on a wall along with other great artists. Without previous study, three students immediately raised their hands and identified Rembrandt as the artist. And one girl also picked out a Van Gogh and a Picasso. The students, as well as the teacher, were very proud of this knowledge.

Art Display Areas

Art display areas should be planned in the most effective spots in school, where students and visitors are most likely to see them. Naturally the main entry foyer to the building is best. The auditorium hallway area is also effective, as is the cafeteria. Many cafeterias have a wall that shouts because of its barrenness.

Libraries also lend themselves to exhibiting art, especially the space above the stacks. Reproductions of renowned artists, or original art collections can be started and the works hung in the library. This was inaugurated in the schools in which this writer taught and it was well received. The original paintings were created by local artists and purchasing funds came from the PTA, or the graduating class, or even from library fines accumulated through a year or two.

For three-dimensional art works, as sculpture, jewelry, and pottery, a display case might be found in a local store and purchased at reasonable cost. Or a special case could be built and placed in the library. One Iowa principal suggested it be placed near the gymnasium so parents and visitors could view art during halftime of basketball games.

At a high school in which this writer taught, the principals and guidance counselors chose student art to be hung in their offices. Drawings, prints and paintings can easily be matted and with display braquettes the works can be hung. In another semester, or another year, the picutres may be exchanged for current student products. Pride was very noticeable in the students whose pieces were chosen.

Value of Good Environment

If students became more aware of their total school environment because it was lively and rewarding, perhaps their eyes would be sharper in sensing the community environment. For example, they might notice store fronts that need remodeling, parks that could use fountains or imaginative play equipment, and a community library with inviting displays, decor, and lighting. A total school environment might just be the spark for a community facelifting.